

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY GETS WAIVER TO EXPEDITE BROADBAND ACCESS IN HUDSON VALLEY

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today obtained a regulatory waiver that will expedite Hudson Valley DataNet's ability to provide increased broadband communications services to the region. Hinchey inserted the waiver language into a federal spending bill that was completed today.

"Now more than ever, it is vital for the Hudson Valley to have additional access to broadband services," said Hinchey. "This waiver is a reasonable way to ensure that these services are widely available as quickly as possible."

Last year, Congress established a Broadband Loan Pilot Program as a means to stimulate economic development in rural areas. The program is administered by the Rural Utility Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Hudson Valley DataNet qualified for a loan through this pilot program earlier this year. However, regulations limiting the size of communities that can benefit from RUS programs had constrained DataNet's ability to implement broadband to all areas.

The September 11 terrorist attacks on New York City created a great need to replace millions of square feet of office space and to provide utility services to the hundreds of displaced companies. Some of this demand is for temporary relocation, some of it may be for longer-term or permanent relocation and some may be for remote redundant back-up sites. In each of these cases, the Hudson Valley offers first-rate relocation sites for these displaced companies. However, without the critical component of broadband communications services, these sites will not be considered.

Because of the heightened urgency of providing broadband communications in the region, Hinchey offered an amendment to the Agriculture Appropriations bill that waives the population limits for existing borrowers within 100 miles of New York City for any RUS project that assists in the recovery effort. This waiver will allow DataNet to apply, on an expedited basis, for additional funding to continue its efforts to quickly bring all key Hudson Valley relocation sites onto its broadband fiber optic network. It will also allow DataNet to apply for more flexibility with its current loan.

The amendment was accepted by the conference committee that completed work on the bill today. Hinchey was a member of the conference committee. The conference report is expected to be passed by Congress next week and then signed into law by the president.